

Emergency Response News



August 2000

IDEM and EPA Respond to Mercury Spill at Homes in Greenfield

Local, state and federal agencies pool resources during operation.

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) joined the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other response agencies at a spill and cleanup of mercury contamination at residences in Greenfield, Hancock County, Indiana.

On August 12, an IDEM responder received a call from a concerned resident about youngsters who had spilled liquid mercury on furniture, carpeting and clothing in several homes. The responder contacted EPA to be the lead agency because of potential health risks to the residents and the extent of contamination.

After talking with the residents, the responder determined that possibly eight ounces of mercury had been spilled in six homes.

Federal, state and local emergency response agencies investigated and decided upon cleanup actions. Air monitoring results detected high levels of mercury in four homes, which required families to be temporarily relocated during the cleanup.

EPA utilized hazardous materials contractors to decontaminate the interiors of the homes. Mercury volatilizes under heated conditions so bedding, clothing, carpeting, furniture and electrical appliances were sealed in plastic bags and taken outside for further testing. Contaminated materials were sent to a hazardous waste landfill. Free mercury was recycled for industrial use.

Hancock County Emergency Management Agency, Hancock County Health Department, Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registry, Greenfield Police and Fire departments and American Red Cross also played major roles.

On August 20, cleanup actions were completed, and residents returned home.



Site Snapshot

IDEM Actions:

Response to mercury spill and cleanup at four homes.

Location:

Residential neighborhood in Greenfield.

Primary Substance of Concern:

Liquid mercury

Health Threats:

Human health exposure to potentially high levels of mercury.

For further information about IDEM's emergency response action at this site, contact staff at the following phone numbers or toll-free at (800) 451-6027:

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